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(54) **EFFICIENT, LOW PRESSURE RATIO
PROPULSOR FOR GAS TURBINE ENGINES**

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This patent is subject to a terminal dis-
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See application file for complete search history.

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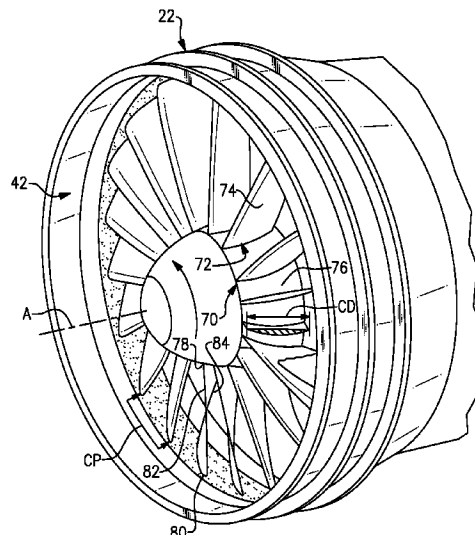
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A gas turbine engine includes a spool, a turbine coupled to
drive the spool, and a propulsor that is coupled to be driven by
the turbine through the spool. A gear assembly is coupled
between the propulsor and the spool such that rotation of the
turbine drives the propulsor at a different speed than the
spool. The propulsor includes a hub and a row of propulsor
blades that extends from the hub. The row includes no more
than 20 of the propulsor blades.

18 Claims, 2 Drawing Sheets



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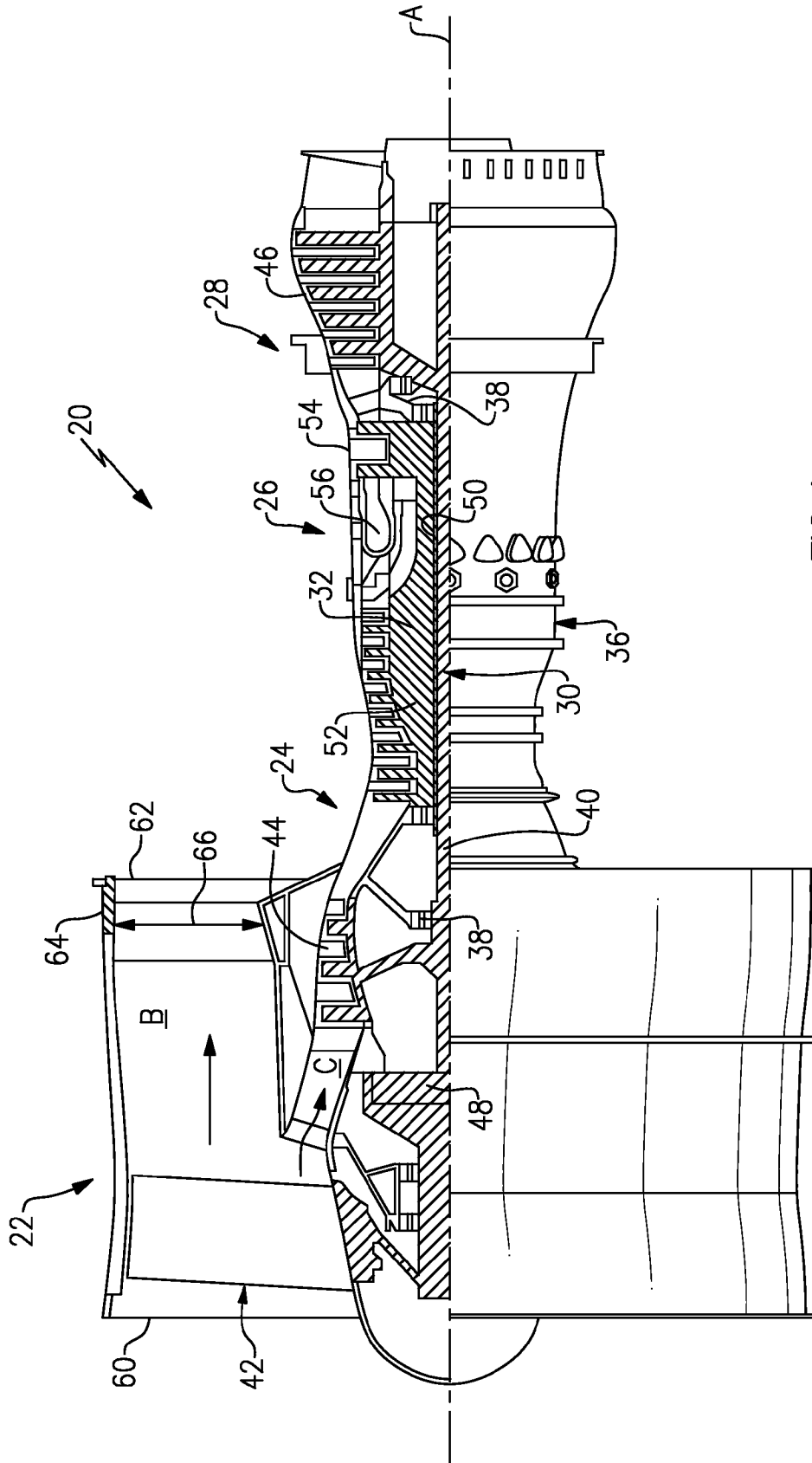


FIG. 1

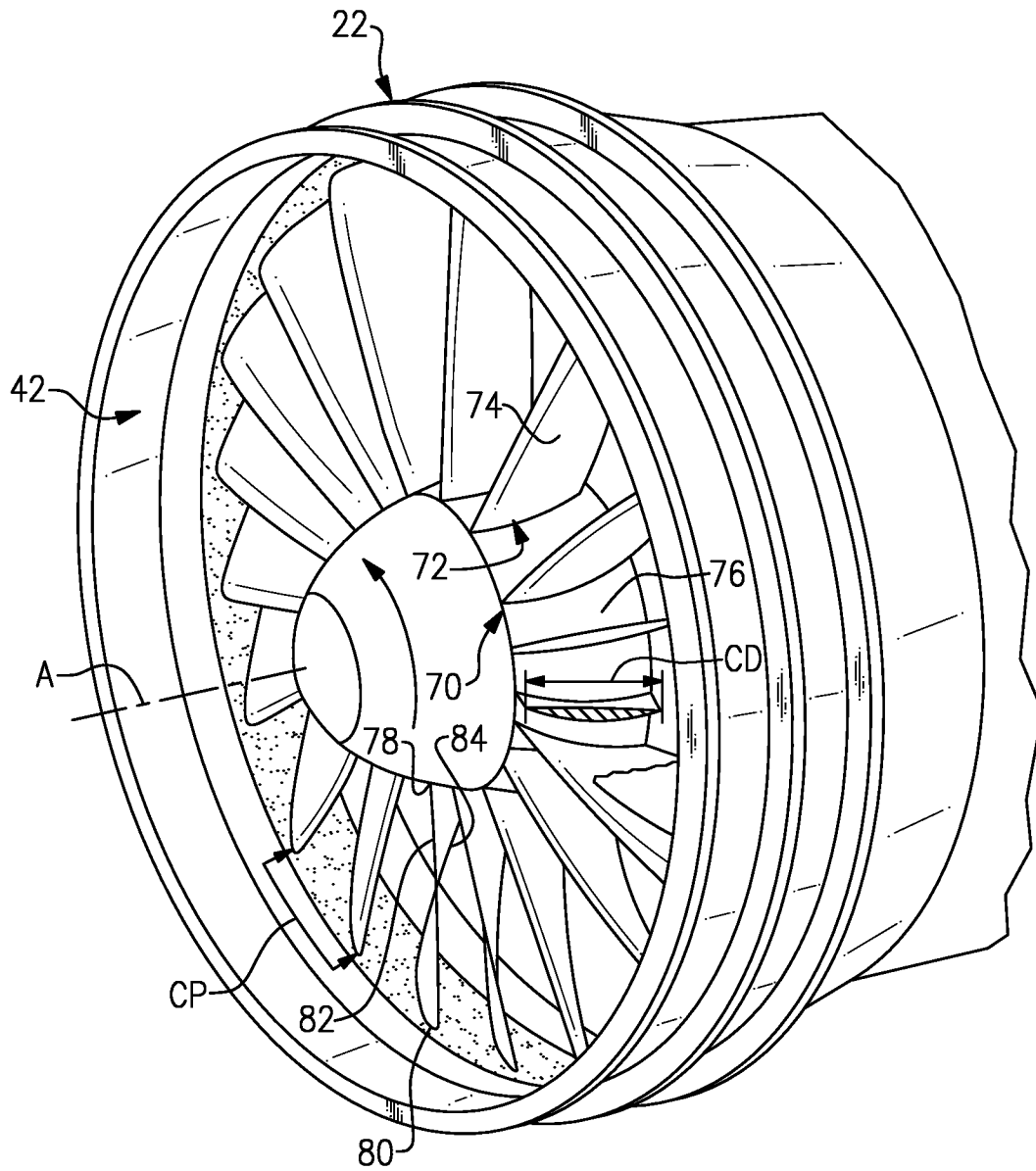


FIG. 2

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EFFICIENT, LOW PRESSURE RATIO PROPULSOR FOR GAS TURBINE ENGINES

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

The present disclosure is a continuation of U.S. application Ser. No. 13/176,365, filed Jul. 5, 2011.

STATEMENT REGARDING FEDERALLY SPONSORED RESEARCH OR DEVELOPMENT

This invention was made with government support under contract number NAS3-01138 awarded by NASA. The government has certain rights in the invention.

BACKGROUND

This disclosure relates to gas turbine engines and, more particularly, to an engine having a geared turbo fan architecture that is designed to efficiently operate with a high bypass ratio and a low pressure ratio.

The propulsive efficiency of a gas turbine engine depends on many different factors, such as the design of the engine and the resulting performance debits on the fan that propels the engine. As an example, the fan rotates at a high rate of speed such that air passes over the blades at transonic or supersonic speeds. The fast-moving air creates flow discontinuities or shocks that result in irreversible propulsive losses. Additionally, physical interaction between the fan and the air causes downstream turbulence and further losses. Although some basic principles behind such losses are understood, identifying and changing appropriate design factors to reduce such losses for a given engine architecture has proven to be a complex and elusive task.

SUMMARY

An exemplary gas turbine engine includes a spool, a turbine coupled to drive the spool, and a propulsor that is coupled to be driven by the turbine through the spool. A gear assembly is coupled between the propulsor and the spool such that rotation of the turbine drives the propulsor at a different speed than the spool. The propulsor includes a hub and a row of propulsor blades that extend from the hub. The row includes no more than 20 of the propulsor blades.

In another aspect, a gas turbine engine includes a core flow passage and a bypass flow passage. A propulsor is arranged at an inlet of the bypass flow passage and core flow passage. The propulsor includes a hub and a row of propulsor blades that extend from the hub. The row includes no more than 20 of the propulsor blades and the bypass flow passage has a design pressure ratio of approximately 1.3-1.55 with regard to an inlet pressure and an outlet pressure of the bypass flow passage.

An exemplary propulsor for use in a gas turbine engine includes a rotor having a row of propulsor blades that extends radially outwardly from a hub. Each of the propulsor blades extends radially between a root and a tip and in a chord direction between a leading edge and a trailing edge to define a chord dimension at the tip of each propulsor blade. The row of propulsor blades defines a circumferential pitch with regard to the tips. The row of propulsor blades has a solidity value defined as the chord dimension divided by the circumferential pitch. The row also includes a number of the propul-

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sor blades that is no greater than 20 such that a ratio of the number of propulsor blades to the solidity value is from 9 to 20.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The various features and advantages of the disclosed examples will become apparent to those skilled in the art from the following detailed description. The drawings that accompany the detailed description can be briefly described as follows.

FIG. 1 is a schematic cross-section of a gas turbine engine.

FIG. 2 is a perspective view of a fan section of the engine of FIG. 1.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

FIG. 1 schematically illustrates a gas turbine engine 20.

The gas turbine engine 20 may be a two-spool turbofan that generally incorporates a fan section 22, a compressor section 24, a combustor section 26 and a turbine section 28. Alternative engine architectures may include a single-spool design, a three-spool design, or an open rotor design, among other systems or features.

The fan section 22 drives air along a bypass flow passage B while the compressor section 24 drives air along a core flow passage C for compression and communication into the combustor section 26. Although depicted as a turbofan gas turbine engine, it is to be understood that the concepts described herein are not limited to use with turbofans and the teachings may be applied to other types of gas turbine engines.

The engine 20 includes a low speed spool 30 and high speed spool 32 mounted for rotation about an engine central longitudinal axis A relative to an engine static structure 36 via several bearing systems 38. The low speed spool 30 generally includes an inner shaft 40 that is coupled with a propulsor 42, a low pressure compressor 44 and a low pressure turbine 46. The low pressure turbine 46 drives the propulsor 42 through the inner shaft 40 and a gear assembly 48, which allows the low speed spool 30 to drive the propulsor 42 at a different (e.g. lower) angular speed.

The high speed spool 32 includes an outer shaft 50 that is coupled with a high pressure compressor 52 and a high pressure turbine 54. A combustor 56 is arranged between the high pressure compressor 52 and the high pressure turbine 54. The inner shaft 40 and the outer shaft 50 are concentric and rotate about the engine central longitudinal axis A, which is collinear with their longitudinal axes.

A core airflow in core flow passage C is compressed by the low pressure compressor 44 then the high pressure compressor 52, mixed with the fuel in the combustor 56, and then expanded over the high pressure turbine 54 and low pressure turbine 46. The turbines 54, 46 rotationally drive the respective low speed spool 30 and high speed spool 32 in response to the expansion.

As shown, the propulsor 42 is arranged at an inlet 60 of the bypass flow passage B and core flow passage C. Air flow through the bypass flow passage B exits the engine 20 through an outlet 62 or nozzle. For a given design of the propulsor 42, the inlet 60 and the outlet 62 of the engine 20 define a design pressure ratio with regard to an inlet pressure at the inlet 60 and an outlet pressure at the outlet 62 of the bypass flow passage B. As an example, the design pressure ratio may be determined based upon the stagnation inlet pressure and the stagnation outlet pressure at a design rotational speed of the engine 20. In that regard, the engine 20 may optionally

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include a variable area nozzle **64** within the bypass flow passage B. The variable area nozzle **64** is operative to change a cross-sectional area **66** of the outlet **62** to thereby control the pressure ratio via changing pressure within the bypass flow passage B. The design pressure ratio may be defined with the variable area nozzle **64** fully open or fully closed.

Referring to FIG. 2, the propulsor **42**, which in this example is a fan, includes a rotor **70** having a row **72** of propulsor blades **74** that extend a circumferentially around a hub **76**. Each of the propulsor blades **74** extends radially outwardly from the hub **76** between a root **78** and a tip **80** and in a chord direction (axially and circumferentially) between a leading edge **82** and a trailing edge **84**. A chord dimension (CD) is a length between the leading edge **82** and the trailing edge **84** at the tip of each propulsor blade **74**. The row **72** of propulsor blades **74** also defines a circumferential pitch (CP) that is equivalent to the arc distance between the tips **80** of neighboring propulsor blades **74**.

As will be described, the example propulsor **42** includes a number (N) of the propulsor blades **74** and a geometry that, in combination with the architecture of the engine **20**, provides enhanced propulsive efficiency by reducing performance debits of the propulsor **42**.

In the illustrated example, the number N of propulsor blades in the row **72** is no more than 20. In one example, the propulsor **42** includes 18 of the propulsor blades **74** uniformly circumferentially arranged about the hub **76**. In other embodiments, the number N may be any number of blades from 12-20.

The propulsor blades **74** define a solidity value with regard to the chord dimension CD and the circumferential pitch CP. The solidity value is defined as a ratio (R) of CD/CP (i.e., CD divided by CP). In embodiments, the solidity value of the propulsor **42** is between 1.0 and 1.3. In further embodiments, the solidity value is from 1.1 to 1.2.

Additionally, in combination with the given example solidity values, the engine **20** may be designed with a particular design pressure ratio. In embodiments, the design pressure ratio may be between 1.3 and 1.55. In a further embodiment, the design pressure ratio may be between 1.3 and 1.4.

The engine **20** may also be designed with a particular bypass ratio with regard to the amount of air that passes through the bypass flow passage B and the amount of air that passes through the core flow passage C. As an example, the design bypass ratio of the engine **20** may nominally be 12, or alternatively in a range of approximately 8.5 to 13.5.

The propulsor **42** also defines a ratio of N/R. In embodiments, the ratio N/R is from 9 to 20. In further embodiments, the ratio N/R is from 14 to 16. The table below shows additional examples of solidity and the ratio N/R for different numbers of propulsor blades **74**.

TABLE

Number of Blades, Solidity and Ratio N/R		
Number of Blades (N)	Solidity	Ratio N/R
20	1.3	15.4
18	1.3	13.8
16	1.3	12.3
14	1.3	10.8
12	1.3	9.2
20	1.2	16.7
18	1.2	15.0
16	1.2	13.3
14	1.2	11.7
12	1.2	10.0
20	1.1	18.2

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TABLE-continued

Number of Blades, Solidity and Ratio N/R		
Number of Blades (N)	Solidity	Ratio N/R
18	1.1	16.4
16	1.1	14.5
14	1.1	12.7
12	1.1	10.9
20	1.0	20.0
18	1.0	18.0
16	1.0	16.0
14	1.0	14.0
12	1.0	12.0

The disclosed ratios of N/R enhance the propulsive efficiency of the disclosed engine **20**. For instance, the disclosed ratios of N/R are designed for the geared turbo fan architecture of the engine **20** that utilizes the gear assembly **48**. That is, the gear assembly **48** allows the propulsor **42** to rotate at a different, lower speed than the low speed spool **30**. In combination with the variable area nozzle **64**, the propulsor **42** can be designed with a large diameter and rotate at a relatively slow speed with regard to the low speed spool **30**. A relatively low speed, relatively large diameter, and the geometry that permits the disclosed ratios of N/R contribute to the reduction of performance debits, such as by lowering the speed of the air or fluid that passes over the propulsor blades **74**.

Although a combination of features is shown in the illustrated examples, not all of them need to be combined to realize the benefits of various embodiments of this disclosure. In other words, a system designed according to an embodiment of this disclosure will not necessarily include all of the features shown in any one of the Figures or all of the portions schematically shown in the Figures. Moreover, selected features of one example embodiment may be combined with selected features of other example embodiments.

The preceding description is exemplary rather than limiting in nature. Variations and modifications to the disclosed examples may become apparent to those skilled in the art that do not necessarily depart from the essence of this disclosure. The scope of legal protection given to this disclosure can only be determined by studying the following claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A gas turbine engine comprising:

a spool;

a turbine coupled to drive the spool;

a propulsor coupled to be driven by said turbine through said spool; and

a gear assembly coupled between said propulsor and said spool such that rotation of said spool drives said propulsor at a different speed than said spool,

wherein said propulsor includes a hub and a row of propulsor blades that extend from said hub, each of said propulsor blades extending radially between a root and a tip and in a chord direction between a leading edge and a trailing edge at the tip to define a chord dimension (CD), said row of propulsor blades defining a circumferential pitch (CP) with regard to said tips such that said row of propulsor blades has a solidity value (R) of CD/CP that is between 1.0 and 1.3, and said row includes a number (N) of said propulsor blades that is no more than 20 such that a ratio of N/R is from 9 to 16.

2. The gas turbine engine as recited in claim 1, wherein said propulsor is located at an inlet of a bypass flow passage having a design pressure ratio that is between 1.3 and 1.55 with regard to an inlet pressure and an outlet pressure of said bypass flow passage.

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3. The gas turbine engine as recited in claim 2, wherein said design pressure ratio is between 1.3 and 1.4.

4. The gas turbine engine as recited in claim 1, wherein R is from 1.1 to 1.2.

5. The gas turbine engine as recited in claim 1, wherein said propulsor is located at an inlet of a core flow passage and a bypass flow passage that define a design bypass ratio of approximately 12 with regard to flow through said core flow passage and said bypass flow passage.

6. The gas turbine engine as recited in claim 5, wherein said propulsor and said bypass flow passage define a design pressure ratio that is between 1.3 and 1.55.

7. The gas turbine engine as recited in claim 6, wherein said design pressure ratio is between 1.3 and 1.4.

8. The gas turbine engine as recited in claim 1, further comprising a low pressure compressor section and a low pressure turbine section that are each coupled to be driven through said spool, and a high pressure compressor section and a high pressure turbine section that are coupled to be driven through another spool.

9. The gas turbine engine as recited in claim 1, wherein a ratio of N/R is from 9 to 14.

10. The gas turbine engine as recited in claim 1, wherein a ratio of N/R is less than 15.

11. The gas turbine engine as recited in claim 1, wherein the number (N) is a total number of said propulsor blades and is no more than 20.

12. The gas turbine engine as recited in claim 1, wherein the number (N) is a total number of said propulsor blades, said total number being between 12 and 20 and said propulsor blades all being equally circumferentially spaced.

13. A gas turbine engine comprising:

a core flow passage;

a bypass flow passage; and

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a propulsor arranged at an inlet of said bypass flow passage and said core flow passage, said propulsor including a hub and a row of propulsor blades that extend from said hub, each of said propulsor blades extending radially between a root and a tip and in a chord direction between a leading edge and a trailing edge at the tip to define a chord dimension (CD), said row of propulsor blades defining a circumferential pitch (CP) with regard to said tips such that said row of propulsor blades has a solidity value (R) of CD/CP that is between 1.0 and 1.3, and said row includes a number (N) of said propulsor blades that is no more than 20 of said propulsor blades such that a ratio of NIR is from 9 to 16, and

wherein said bypass flow passage has a design pressure ratio of 1.3-1.55 with regard to an inlet pressure and an outlet pressure of said bypass flow passage.

14. The gas turbine engine as recited in claim 13, wherein said design pressure ratio is between 1.3 and 1.4.

15. The gas turbine engine as recited in claim 13, wherein R from 1.1 to 1.2.

16. The gas turbine engine as recited in claim 13, wherein said propulsor is coupled to be driven by a turbine through a spool, and a gear assembly is coupled between said propulsor and said spool such that rotation of said turbine drives said propulsor at a different speed than said spool.

17. The gas turbine engine as recited in claim 13, wherein the number (N) is a total number of said propulsor blades and is no more than 20.

18. The gas turbine engine as recited in claim 13, wherein the number (N) is a total number of said propulsor blades, said total number being between 12 and 20 and said propulsor blades all being equally circumferentially spaced.

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